

Integrated Holistic Yoga Pathway to Health and Resilience



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Stanford
MEDICINE

Department of Psychiatry
and Behavioral Sciences

What is YogaX?

- YogaX is a special initiative in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Stanford School of Medicine
- Our unique model of training is grounded in modern neuroscience and psychology research, as well as the ancient wisdom and psychology of yoga
- We offer many opportunities to train with us:
 - YA-registered YTT 200
 - YA-registered YTT 300
 - Certificate for yoga in mental healthcare
 - Workshops
 - Classes and practices

The mission of this unique **integrated holistic model** is to bring yoga into healthcare



Integrated Holistic Yoga

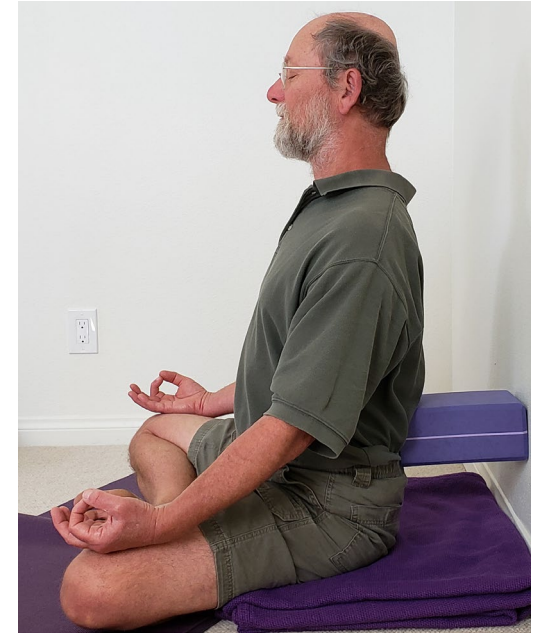
Definitions and Commitment

- **A practice for everyone** – accessibility, solidarity, equity, empowerment, and engaged action
- **A practice with profound benefits** – health, mental health, and relationship benefits – via several mechanisms of change
- **A practice of intentional lifestyle choices** – making the world a better place; living with intention and passion
- **A practice of wholeness** – koshas, biopsychosociocultural context, interconnection, sangha or community
- **A practice of integration** – 8 limbs, integrating modern neuroscience with ancient wisdom

A Practice for Everyone: Letting pictures speak 😊



A Practice for Everyone: Letting pictures speak 😊



A Practice With Profound Benefits

- Restoration of physical balance, strength, and flexibility
- Enhanced physical health, including greater stress tolerance, improved immunity, better heart health, less inflammation, and longer telomeres that lead to healthy aging
- Transformation of hypo- or hyperarousal into grounded, resilient, and open social engagement
- Liberation of vitality and healthful energy
- Development of attention and awareness with reduction of distraction
- Creation of new healthful mental, behavioral, and relational habits and grooves
- Reduction of physical, affective, mental, and emotional reactivity
- Embrace of an optimistic outlook on life without toxic positivity
- Embrace of our interconnection, interdependence, and co-regulation
- Growth of compassion, lovingkindness, and appreciative joy

A Practice of Intentional Lifestyle Choices

- **Intention and altruistic motivation**
 - *Wholesomeness at the beginning* (creation of intention for practice, action, life stage...)
 - *Wholesomeness in the middle* (care and attention during the implementation of the practice, action, life stage)
 - *Wholesomeness at the end* (dedication of merit of practice, action, life stage)
- **Commitment to the greater good**
 - Equanimity - *The heart that is peaceful and ready for anything*
 - Compassion - *The heart that seeks the end of suffering for all*
 - Lovingkindness - *The heart that is openly loving toward everyone*
 - Appreciative and altruistic joy - *The heart that is joyful for everyone*

A Practice of Wholism: Koshas or Sheaths of Consciousness

Being

by Swami Jnaneshvara

We are human beings.
We are physical beings.
We are breathing beings.
We are sensing beings.
We are thinking beings.
We are feeling beings.
We are intuitive beings.
We are spiritual beings.

- **Kosha: Layer of self or consciousness**
- **Maya: Illusion – constructions of the mind; a way of experiencing ourselves in the tangible world**
- **Annamaya kosha** – embodied self or *body consciousness* (“anna” = food)
- **Pranamaya kosha** – affective or energetic self or *affect consciousness* (“prana” = breath; “Prana” = life force)
- **Manomaya kosha** – verbal and social self or *mind consciousness* (“mano” = mind)
- **Vijnanamaya kosha** – decentered, wisely intuitive self or *wisdom consciousness* (“vijnana” = wisdom)
- **Anandamaya kosha** – joyful integrated self or *unity/universal consciousness* (“Ananda” = bliss, joy)

Wholism: Koshas in Context

Koshas: A Developmental Model of Development and Healing

The koshas develop in the interpersonal matrix of our biopsychosociocultural context. Humans are born utterly dependent on resources from the collective and cannot survive or thrive without being nurtured, cared for, and deeply understood.

Wholesome development through the layers of self is facilitated by

- a healthy and supportive biopsychosociocultural collective with structures of equity, justice, inclusion, and caring *and*
- a nurturing and available interpersonal matrix of reliability, nurturance, love, and support.

When things go wrong the biopsychosociocultural matrix, especially in our closest and most trusting relationships, development in the koshas may be thwarted, and suffering, pain, challenge, and lack of resilience may ensue.

Wholism: Koshas in Context

Koshas' development and presentation across the lifespan is deeply shaped and affected by the biopsychosociocultural context, as well as resonating back into this interpersonal matrix and environment.

Using the BPSC model helps us understand development across the koshas and the path to suffering.



Biological Factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ genetics ○ physical disabilities ○ developmental issues ○ health issues ○ accidents and injuries ○ nutritional status ○ sleep quality ○ medications ○ medical family history 	Intersection of Bio-Psycho		Psychological Factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ temperament ○ personality ○ self-identity ○ resilience and coping ○ affect and emotion ○ cognitive style ○ learning styles ○ intellectual capacity ○ executive functioning 				
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Intersection of Socio-Cultural							

Wholism: Koshas in Context

To summarize:

Development, maintenance, and healing depend upon

- presence or establishment of **safe and trusting relationship(s)**
- **activation of experience, emotions, and cognition** (bottom-up and top-down)
- **co-construction of implicit and explicit memory**, including personal and collective narratives
- **creation of resilience through exposure to moderate stress and challenge**

Therapeutic practice of yoga can facilitate all of these requirements.

*“We are all connected;
to each other, biologically.
To the Earth, chemically.
And to the rest of the universe,
atomically.”*

Neil DeGrasse Tyson (astrophysicist)

A Practice of Integration: Eight Limbs of Yoga

- Limb 1 – **Yama** = Life Choices for Ethical Living
- Limb 2 – **Niyama** = Life Choices for Purposeful Living
- Limb 3 – **Asana** = Physical Postures (‘taking a seat’)
- Limb 4 – **Pranayama** = Breathing exercises (‘freeing the breath’)
- Limb 5 – **Pratyahara** = Drawing inward (‘guarding the senses’)
- Limb 6 – **Dharana** = Concentration exercises
- Limb 7 – **Dhyana** = Meditation
- Limb 8 – **Samadhi** = Absorption (‘awakening to a new consciousness’)

Integration: Eight Limbs of Yoga

Limb 1: Yamas or Life Choices for Ethical Living and Teaching

The yamas are aspirational first-person ethics principles. They are neither prescriptions nor proscriptions – they are a life-long practice of refinement and growth. The emphasis on the word “aspirational” means that this limb offers us guidelines for ethical living to which we aspire and that we know we will fail to heed. They are the backdrop against which the kosha develop, heal, and transform.

- **Ahimsa** – do no harm: nonviolence and peacefulness toward self, other, and everything
- **Satya** – be truthful: showing up with honesty, integrity, and authenticity
- **Asteya** – feel abundant: not taking what is not freely offered, not appropriating without acknowledgment, reciprocity
- **Brahmacharya** – use energy and power wisely: living in alignment with values and virtues
- **Aparigraha** – do not get greedy or possessive: practicing gratitude and the relinquishment of grasping, clinging, and jealousy

Integration: Eight Limbs of Yoga

Limb 2: Niyamas or Life Choices for Purposeful Living and Teaching

Discipline, as embraced in the commitments of Limb Two, helps us create a cohesive change-embracing motivational set that inspires our life plans and trajectories. These principles influence the direction of our personal development in all koshas, including the capacity to access joy and bliss. They move us, ultimately, toward making lasting contributions to the world – hopefully in a manner that adds to the greater good.

- **Saucha** – purity: balance, simplicity, and authenticity in action, speech, and thought
- **Santosha** – contentment: peacefulness and grounding that serve as a platform for discerning balanced and calm action
- **Tapas** – determination: disciplined effort and engaged practice to support balanced choices
- **Svadyaya** – self-reflection: cultivation of self-knowledge, insight, and growth; openness to learning
- **Ishvara pranidhana** – commitment to a greater good: commitment to creating purpose and meaning for self and other through balanced discernment

Integration: Eight Limbs of Yoga

Limb 3: Asana or Healing through Form and Movement

The practice of asana aligns closely annamaya and pranamaya koshas. It also continues to express the commitment to the first two limbs and therefore integrated ethics and lifestyle commitments into the physical practice. Asana in this sense always reflects a deeper commitment to an integrated practice that never abandons any of the other limbs of yoga.

Effort and ease – the union of opposites

- flexibility within strength, strength within flexibility
- softness in firmness, firmness in softness
- strength at the core, softness at the edges
- stillness in movement, movement in stillness
- dedication and commitment without attachment to outcomes
- fierceness with compassion

Integration: Eight Limbs of Yoga

Limb 3: Asana or Healing through Form and Movement

- **Synergy** – Always linked to all other limbs
 - Practice with the yamas and niyamas
 - Combine breath with movement
 - Use movement to explore the mind, heart, and relationships
- **Completeness and balance** – applied in all koshas
 - grounding, expansion, stability
 - balancing the autonomic nervous system states (polyvagal theory; gunas)
- **Integration and attunement** – a bottom-up process of reconnecting body, mind, emotion, and heart
 - neuroception
 - proprioception
 - interoception
 - exteroception

Integration: Eight Limbs of Yoga

Limb 4: Pranayama or Healing through Freeing the Breath

Pranayama is often presented as breath control. However, integrated holistic yoga emphasizes freeing and balancing the breath. This is not contradictory with the Yoga Sutras. Tracing of the linguistic roots of pranayama suggests that both freeing and controlling the breath are valid interpretations.

- **Optimal Functional Breathing**
 - Nasal and biasing the diaphragm
 - Slow and rhythmic; light and subtle
- **Breath Dimensions**
 - Volume, timing, texture, space or location, resting pauses
- **Stimulation of the Vagus Nerve** and Resilience in the ANS
 - Balancing or stabilizing breathing
 - Calming or grounding breathing
 - Vitalizing or expansive breathing

Integration: Eight Limbs of Yoga

Limb 5 : Pratyahara – guarding senses and energy via awareness and introspection

- **Working with sensory stimuli, inputs, and impressions** – This process starts with becoming more familiar with the way sensory information arrives in or is processed outside of our consciousness. All humans tend to have patterns in their sensory processing and preferences. Some sensory information is more accessible; some is partially, selectively, or even completely overlooked.
- **Working with abhyasa and vairagyam** – This is attunement to sensory information without attachment, without reactivity, with balance and ease. We simply note stimuli for what they are, without attributions, interpretations, biases, or reactivities. As the mind begins to quiet, life force is freed up to feed and replenish the koshas
- **Working with the kleshas** – As impressions arrive in our awareness, our brain begins to make predictions about how they will affect us in all our koshas. This can trigger the kleshas, our affective predilections, as well as being mediated by our gunas and polyvagal states. In turn, the gunas and kleshas flavor our subsequent mind stories (i.e., vrittis) and emotions. The impact of the kleshas is directly explored in pratyahara.
- **Enhancing awareness of habitual reactivity and its effects** – As we recognize our habits in response to sensory inputs, we also begin to appreciate the effects of these habits. We see how they affect our way of being in the world and in relationship with ourselves and others. We see the impacts on our capacity to cope, to access wellbeing, to maintain physical, emotional, and mental health.

Integration: Eight Limbs of Yoga

Limb 6: Dharana – single-pointed, soft attention and accessing calm mind states

- **Creating single-pointed focus and sustained attention** – The most central aspect of dharana is the creation of a single point of focus, the refinement of the mind to move it away from distraction, interruption, fragmentation, and dysregulation. This focus can be on an internal or external object or subject; this object or subject can be simple or complex, tangible or conceptual.
- **Inviting concentrated and luminous mind states** – through concentration, we begin to realize that we neither have to fight nor flee nor obey our disorganized, distracted, confused, or lethargic mind states. Instead, we can choose simply to become aware of them, to notice what the mind is doing.
- **Disarming the default mode network and moving into wholeness** – Engaging and reengaging (however often is necessary) focused attention is an excellent way of disarming our default mode network (DMN) and releasing us from the perpetual planning and problem-solving of the executive control network (ECN) that keeps us stuck in past and future and that has the potential to move us into judgment, fragmentation, and negativity.
- **Working with non-attachment to an outcome** – Dharana relies on the capacity to practice with the commitment and persistent effort as well as the non-attachment to an outcome. Concentration practices are free from striving, expectation, desire, fear, or ego. They are accomplished – as is true for all yogic *practices* – through balanced effort, not stressful striving or overdoing. They are free of attachment to a particular outcome.

Integration: Eight Limbs of Yoga

Limb 7: Dhyana – moving into spacious awareness with meditation

- **Cultivation of Awareness** - Meditation retrains attention via cultivating meta-awareness. It is the ability to attend to our own attention; to track where our attention is landing in any given moment. Meta-awareness means mindfully, nonjudgmentally, compassionately catching ourselves doing what we are doing, feeling what we are feeling, thinking what we are thinking, acting how we are acting.
- **Cultivation of compassion, lovingkindness, and altruistic joy** – The inner practices in general and meditation in particular, along with the values expressed in the yamas and the commitments expressed in the niyamas, call on us to acknowledge and truly sense into our generosity, our kind-heartedness, our social connection (and dependence!), our profound grounding in and responsibility for community, our deep need to love and be loved, our complete dependence on other humans to live, thrive, grow, evolve, and be happy.
- **Cultivation of insight** – The wisdom that arises from meditation is based in awareness and compassion and reflects clear knowing, a deep appreciation for our true nature, and a deep intimacy with our inner and outer world and the contributions of all of these factors to our day-to-day functioning.
- **Cultivating purpose** – The final principle of meditation is our engagement in skillful, auspicious action marked by altruism and service. Once awareness and compassionate insight have developed, the next logical step in our journey of self-realization and liberation becomes engaged action.

Integration: Eight Limbs of Yoga

Limb 8: Samadhi – awakening to a new consciousness

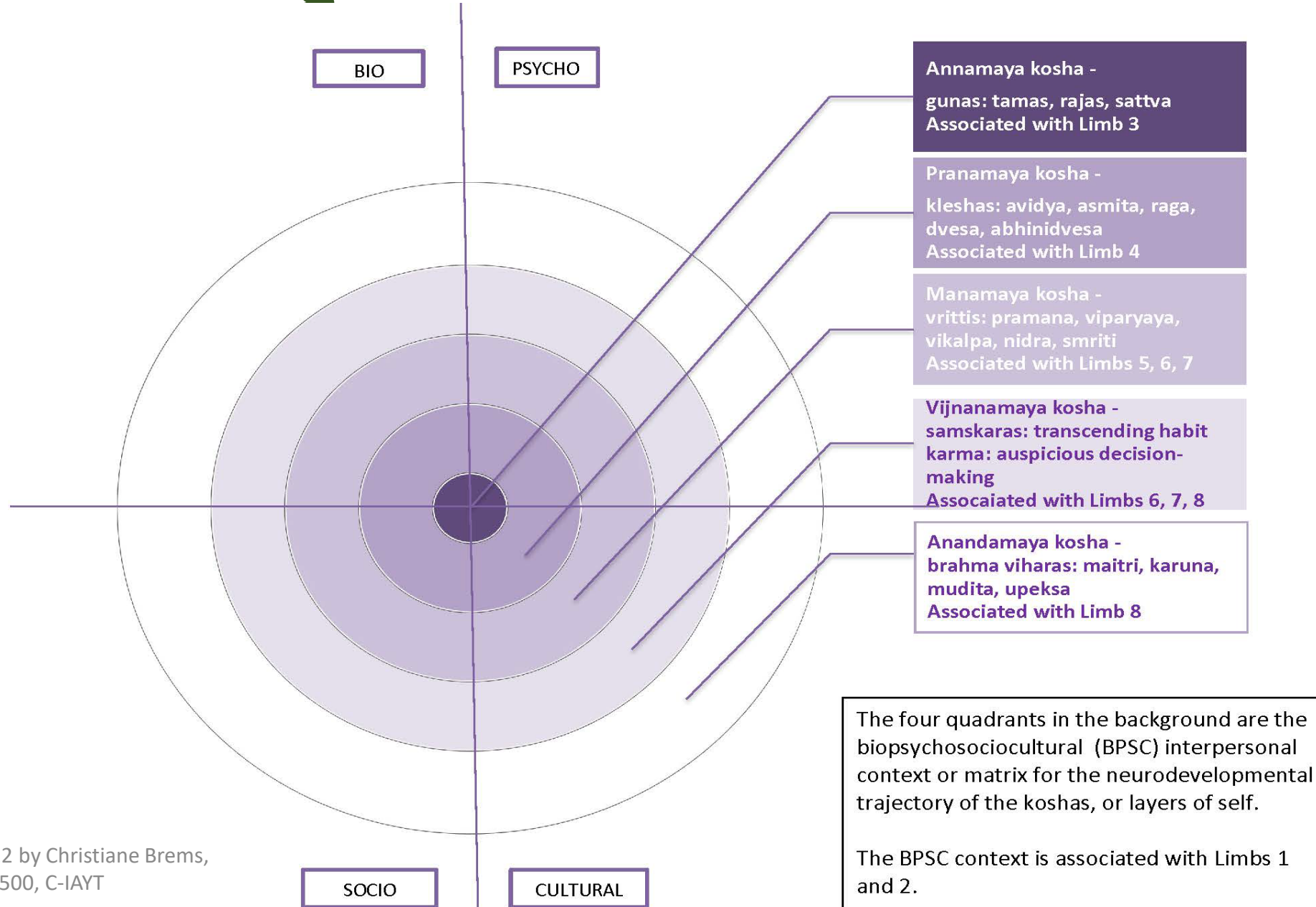
- **Samadhi has many definitions:**
 - Enlightenment (as opposed to freedom = moksha)
 - Freedom from desire and discontent
 - Joyful and embodied presence
 - Bliss and oneness
 - Unraveling mental, emotional, and physical knots

“The careful collecting of oneself into the present moment.”

(J. Goldstein, YouTube talk: Satti patthana Sutta Session 3)

Samadhi is the receipt and experience of joy and embodied presence, an unraveling of mental, emotional, and physical knots so that we are left with bliss and an understanding of our oneness. Absorption is unique to each one of us and defies definition.

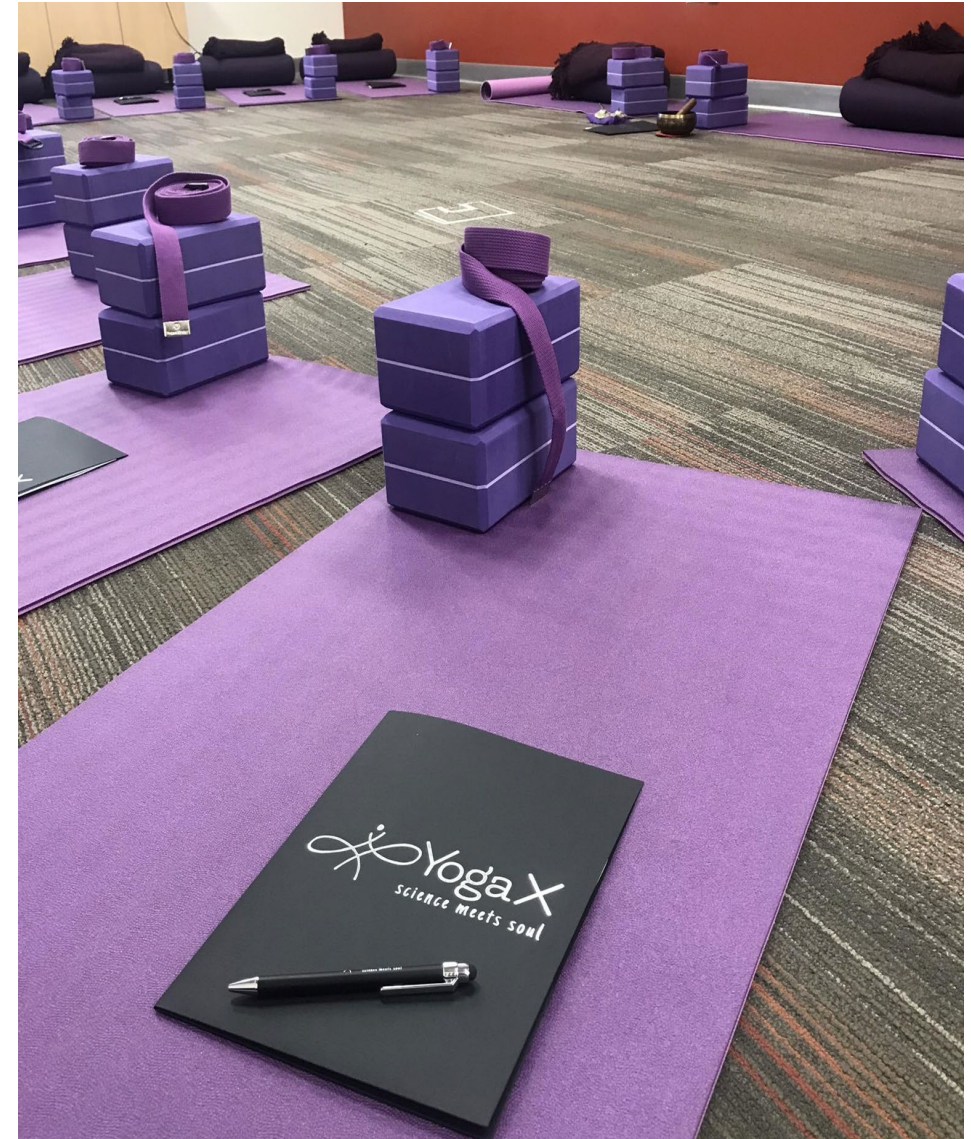
Integration and Wholism: Union



YogaX Trainings

We offer many opportunities to train with us:

- YA-registered YTT 200 – next training starts on March 10, 2023
- YA-registered YTT 300 – currently taking applications for rolling enrollment
- Certificate for yoga in mental healthcare – application available online
- Workshops – information updated regularly on our webpage
- Classes and practices spanning the eight limbs – information on our webpage and YogaXteam YouTube channel; many are free to all



YogaX Resources

Teacher Trainings:

- <https://www.yogaxteam.com/200hr>
- <https://www.yogaxteam.com/300hr-ytt>
- <https://www.yogaxteam.com/mental-health-certificate>

Workshops:

- <https://www.yogaxteam.com/workshops>

Livestreamed Classes (free of charge):

- <https://www.yogaxteam.com/classes>

YouTube Channel (free of charge):

- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqcemITS8NdwWoS1E_jcY7w/featured

Blog:

- <https://www.yogaxteam.com/blog>

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